

# **Hatchery Scientific Review Group**

## **Policies and Procedures**

**April 14, 2000**

### **I. Purpose**

The Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) was established by Congress in FY 2000 to assure that hatchery reform programs in Puget Sound and Coastal Washington be scientifically founded and evaluated; that independent scientists interact with agency and tribal scientists to provide direction and operational guidelines; and that the system as a whole be evaluated for compliance with scientific recommendations. The purpose of the HSRG is to serve as an independent panel working with agencies and tribes to produce guidelines and recommended actions and ensure that the goals of hatchery reform are carried out; to identify scientific needs; and to make recommendations on further experimentation.

The goal of hatchery reform is to ensure that hatchery programs in Puget Sound and Coastal Washington are managed and operated in order to meet one or both of the purposes for hatcheries: 1) providing for sustainable fisheries and 2) recovering and conserving naturally spawning populations. The goal of the HSRG is to use the best available scientific information based on logic and knowledge for the purposes of repositioning hatcheries and implementing hatchery reform. Success in this effort means that the hatchery management agencies concur with the recommended actions and implement changes.

The HSRG is developing a scientific framework that will be used by the co-managers: 1) to provide the basis for developing scientifically sound decisions and a strategy to reposition hatcheries to focus on the benefits they can provide for helping recover species and supporting sustainable fisheries; 2) to help guide initial actions to reduce risks from hatcheries and comply with the ESA; 3) to help NMFS and the co-managers develop comprehensive species management plans and basin plans that go beyond ESA requirements; 4) to provide guidance on operations, management and implementation; 5) to provide guidance on monitoring and evaluation activities; 6) to direct a coherent, long term research program that improves the scientific information base needed for hatchery reform; and 7) to inform hatchery education and outreach programs.

### **II. Scope of HSRG Activities**

#### **A. Objectives**

Based on an agreed-upon scientific framework and criteria for decision making, the HSRG will:

1. Develop a scientific framework to provide a basis for strategic planning for hatchery reform.

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2. Work with tribal, federal and state agencies to review hatchery management plans, policies and program implementation for consistency with the scientific framework.
3. Identify information needs and recommend further research.
4. Develop a system to verify that hatchery reform is occurring.
5. Work with Long Live the Kings to communicate with agencies, the scientific community, interested parties and the public.
6. Submit a written report annually to the agencies, tribes and Congress, evaluating progress toward meeting goals, with any disagreements clearly and evenly presented.

### **Relationship to State and Federal Agencies and Tribes**

The HSRG shall establish regular communication with the agencies and tribes that manage hatchery programs, and with agencies having regulatory review of hatchery programs, in Puget Sound and Coastal Washington. The initial method of achieving such communication will be through the Hatchery Reform Coordinating Committee, other meetings and via written communications. The HSRG will work with the fisheries managers to develop work plans and products that provide for timely scientific direction and review of current and future hatchery operations. Questions and issues for consideration by the HSRG should be submitted to the HSRG Coordinator, as described in section IV.A.

## **III. Membership**

### **A. Appointment Procedures**

As directed by Congressional legislation, the HSRG is comprised of five independent scientists and four agency scientists. The independent scientists were initially selected by the Gorton Science Advisory Team from a pool of candidates nominated by the President of the American Fisheries Society (AFS). The agency scientists include one each designated by the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. In the future, when an independent scientist steps down, a replacement will be selected by the HSRG from a list of three nominees provided by the President of AFS. When an agency scientist steps down, a replacement will be selected by that agency, following consultation with the HSRG. If an independent scientist is interested in serving an additional term, that person may be reappointed by vote of the HSRG. If an agency scientist is interested in serving an additional term, that person may be reappointed by the agency, following consultation with the HSRG.

### **B. Criteria**

The following specific criteria should be considered in selecting members:

1. High achievement in a relevant scientific discipline, which may include biology, genetics, ecology, fisheries, fish culture, fish pathology, biometrics or other appropriate disciplines.
2. A strong record of scientific accomplishment documented by contribution to the peer-reviewed literature or other evidence of creative scientific accomplishment.
3. High standards of scientific integrity, independence and objectivity.
4. Ability to forge creative solutions to complex problems.
5. Interest in and ability to work effectively in an interdisciplinary setting.
6. Each of the agency scientists should have technical skills in relevant fields, such as biology or fish genetics, and some understanding of agency hatchery processes; administrative status within the agency is not relevant.
7. Like the independent scientists, the agency scientists are responsible for evaluating scientific merits and are not to represent agency policies.

#### **C. Length of Appointments**

Appointment to the HSRG will normally be three years. Terms will be staggered to preserve continuity and institutional memory. Appointments can be renewed using the normal appointment procedures outlined above.

#### **D. Staff**

1. The HSRG may contract for staff or consider alternative arrangements.
2. A staff coordinator will be appointed by the Chair, to support the HSRG in its work. The coordinator will work closely with the Chair in establishing and executing HSRG agendas and work plans.
3. The staff will assist the Chair and the HSRG in contacts with other organizations and committees in the region. The staff will act as a resource to the HSRG and should be familiar with the policies and scientific issues that are likely to come before the HSRG.

#### **E. Outside Expertise**

It may be necessary to secure the services of outside experts to provide assistance on specific activities. Such appointments can be made by the HSRG Chair, as allowed by budget limitations. Temporary appointees meet the same criteria as regular members (section III.B) and are subject to the same rules regarding bias and conflict of interest as regular members (section IV.F).

### **IV. Procedures**

#### **A. Agenda**

Questions or issues to be considered for inclusion on the HSRG agenda should be submitted to the HSRG coordinator. The coordinator will bring these to the Chair, who will consider the scientific aspects of the questions or issues and whether they fit within HSRG work plans and priorities. The Chair and the HSRG coordinator will develop a draft agenda for each meeting, for consideration by and approval of the group.

## **B. Meetings**

The HSRG will meet on a regular basis. Much of the work of the HSRG will be conducted between meetings by members and task teams or committees, responding to assignments from the Chair or the HSRG as a whole. Meetings will provide the opportunity to report back, discuss work and formulate HSRG positions and recommendations. Members are expected to place a high priority on attendance and participation in HSRG meetings. Members may bring relevant staff to informational sessions on the HSRG agenda, but should coordinate this attendance in advance with the HSRG Chair and coordinator. HSRG discussion and decision making sessions are to be attended by HSRG members and support staff only.

Meetings are normally to be held at a location in western Washington at intervals appropriate to the requirements of HSRG business. Summaries of meetings will be prepared by support staff and reviewed by the Chair and will include a summary of decisions and actions, work assignments and schedules. HSRG members may be compensated for time and travel.

## **C. Confidentiality of HSRG Deliberations**

The HSRG is subject to the following confidentiality standards:

1. In order to encourage individual members to express their views freely and to encourage a full and complete scientific debate on issues, deliberations of the HSRG are to be considered confidential and privileged communications. To protect the confidentiality of the deliberative process, HSRG members and staff are asked to refrain from disclosing the contents of HSRG meetings and draft reports. Decisions, actions and descriptions of issues under review by the HSRG may be communicated. If a member is unsure about what is appropriate to communicate on any issue, that member should consult with the Chair.
2. In addressing any individual funding proposal to the HSRG, a summary of the HSRG evaluation may be provided to the author of the proposal, provided the summary preserves the anonymity of HSRG members who performed the evaluation.
3. Any reports prepared by the HSRG should provide a full explanation of the rationale for HSRG decisions, in order to provide the public with an understanding of why those decisions were made.

#### **D. Work Plan**

The Chair of the HSRG will work with the HSRG coordinator to prepare short term and long term work plans to accomplish the purposes of the HSRG. Frequency of meetings will be determined by the work plan.

#### **E. Communication**

1. The Chair of the HSRG will normally act as spokesperson, unless another member is designated by the Chair to speak on specific topics or at specific times. The HSRG will normally respond to questions or issues in writing. Public statements by the Chair or designated spokesperson should reflect HSRG decisions and positions.
2. The HSRG coordinator will act as the point of contact for inquiries and requests to the HSRG. The coordinator will ensure that these communications are promptly conveyed to the Chair.
3. Within the HSRG, a standard procedure for communication of documents and messages (including electronic communication) will be established. These procedures will be adopted to maximize work efficiency.
4. Procedures will be established for communicating with relevant agencies and tribes and for providing HSRG reports and testimony to Congress.

#### **F. Bias and Conflict of Interest**

For the efforts of the HSRG to be influential and credible, the HSRG must be perceived to be free of any significant conflict of interest, not compromised by bias and untainted by allegations of scientific misconduct. The HSRG will deal with a broad range of issues concerning hatchery reform efforts. For this reason, there is ample opportunity for potential conflicts to arise for members on specific topics. It is imperative that the members of the HSRG are aware of the potential for conflict and are especially aware of the dangers of a *perception* of conflict. The HSRG will define bias and conflict as follows:

1. Bias—Bias relates to views stated or positions taken that arise not from scientific analysis, but from the close identification or association with the positions or perspectives of a particular group.
2. Conflict of Interest—Conflict of interest means any financial or other interest which would benefit the individual and which conflicts with the service of an individual because it could impair the individual's objectivity or create an unfair competitive advantage for any person or organization.
3. Bias and Conflict of Interest Procedures
  - a. Members of the HSRG are expected to take the responsibility for ensuring that real or perceived biases or conflicts of interest on their part are identified prior to taking part in any project. Members are expected to excuse themselves from work on any topic on which they perceive a real or potential conflict or bias.

- b. Each member of the HSRG will submit to the HSRG Coordinator and Chair relevant information regarding financial interests, research support, agency or group affiliation, public statements and positions, and other circumstances or information.
- c. Relevant disclosure information should include connections between the individual and work relating to the HSRG.
- d. Information submitted will be considered confidential.
- e. The Chair will take this information into account in making assignments on specific tasks. Members are also expected to announce any potential conflict or bias relating to particular assignments.
- f. In the event there remains any substantial question on the existence of a conflict of interest, it is preferred that the member involved request to be excused, in order to protect the HSRG from any appearance of conflict or bias. Unresolved questions will be decided by a vote of the HSRG.

## **G. Organization**

### **1. Officers**

- a. Elections—Officers of the HSRG will be elected by the members. Election of officers should occur at least 30 days prior to the expiration of the previous officer's term. An election of officers will occur each year.
- b. Officers and Terms—Officers of the HSRG shall consist of the Chair and Vice Chair, who will serve one-year terms.
- c. Duties of Chair—The Chair is the executive officer of the HSRG. The Chair acts as the spokesperson of the group and designates another member to serve as an alternate spokesperson when the Chair is not available. The Chair works with HSRG support staff to arrange the time and place for meetings, produce meeting summaries and ensure summaries and other documents are forwarded to the membership. The Chair ensures that meeting business is conducted in a timely and efficient manner and that each member has the opportunity to contribute and be heard. The Chair of the HSRG is to be selected by HSRG members from the independent scientists chosen from the AFS nominations. The Chair should have experience in dealing effectively with complex, highly controversial, scientific issues.
- d. Duties of the Vice Chair—The Vice Chair's role shall be to assist the Chair in implementing the HSRG work plan and other activities of the HSRG, as assigned by the Chair.

### **2. Committees, Task Groups and Assignments**

The Chair may designate members of the HSRG to perform assignments and to form committees and/or task teams to address specific topics. Each committee or task team should have a designated lead responsible for overseeing completion of

the task. Committees may include experts from outside the HSRG. Such appointments can be made by the Chair.

**H. Publications**

*To be determined at a later date.*

**J. Soliciting, Reviewing and Deciding on Grant Requests**

*To be determined at a later date.*

*References*

*The Reform of Salmon and Steelhead Hatcheries in Puget Sound and Coastal Washington to Recover Natural Stocks While Providing Fisheries, Gorton Science Advisory Team, May 7, 1999.*

*Washington State Hatchery Reform Language, FY 2000 Consolidated Appropriations Act, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Resource Management, Page H12365*